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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, August 13, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Our Daily Bread." Approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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I wish we could take a trip through a modern bakery this morning -- or rather this evening, for most bakeries are in full operation after ten o'clock at night. We'd start in the storage rooms where the flour is kept. This room is as large as half a city block. Nearby is a door that leads into a huge ice-box, where we'd find lard, yeast, and malt, molasses for the rye bread, and barrels of condensed milk.

We'd ask the foreman to take us into the mixing room, where they make one thousand pounds of bread dough in less than fifteen minutes. The dough is kneaded by a forty-horsepower electric motor.

Finally, we'd see the oven -- an oven one hundred and fifty feet long, about twenty feet wide -- full of loaves and loaves of bread, all moving slowly on an endless belt. The finished loaves come out of the oven as crisp, brown, and fragrant as any you ever saw, ready to be wrapped, piled in big motor trucks, and rushed off to distributing points for early morning customers.

Well -- since I can't invite you to go with me through the bakery I visited some months ago -- let's talk about a phase of our daily bread that affects all of us -- the price. Do you know whether you are paying more or less than the average price for white bread?

Some time ago a listener in the South wrote me that she was paying nine cents a pound loaf for white bread. "Don't you think," she wrote, "that nine cents is a little high?"

I made some inquiries of people in Washington who keep up with prices of staple foods, and found that the average price for white bread was 8.1 cents a pound. However, a nine-cent average was reported in seven cities -- Jacksonville, Butte, Scranton, Seattle, San Francisco, Newark, and Savannah,

"Why is bread selling for nine cents in those cities?" I asked, and was told that the increased cost of bread might be due to higher labor costs, or higher transportation costs -- nobody knew the exact answer.

Another thing that affects the price of bread is the processing tax on wheat, one of the features of the agricultural recovery program. However, the processing tax on wheat adds only a little under half a cent to the cost of a pound loaf of bread.

This tax, of course, goes back to the wheat farmer. Every cent of it -- except the little bit that covers the cost of administering the adjustment program for wheat farmers -- and that's a very small fraction of the total tax collected. By paying half a cent a pound more for a loaf of white bread, we make an important contribution to the recovery of the wheat farmers.

Homemakers, in particular, are interested in bread labels, as well as in the price of bread. The United States Food and Drugs Act requires that the net weight of a loaf of bread must be stated on the wrapper. And any other information given must be true. For example, if there's a picture on the wrapper, it must not be deceptive, but a true picture of what's inside the wrapper.

It pays to read the label. As a rule, we probably buy what we think is a one-pound loaf. But one way of raising the price of bread is to decrease the size of the loaf, and charge the same price as before. If we read the label, we can be pretty sure of the weight. If we have any doubts, we can weigh the bread at home, or ask the grocer to weigh it for us.

Under the Bakers' Code, which went into effect June 18, a committee from the baking industry is working with Government agencies in the study of standards of quality, nomenclature, weight, labeling, and dating of bakery products. Good news for consumers -- we will appreciate having more facts about our daily bread.

Referring again to bread labels, many States require them; in other States, even though the law does not require it, bakers use labels as a matter of good business.

As I told you before, the Food and Drugs Act requires that any information given on the wrapper must be true. Bread labeled "Whole Wheat," for instance, must be made of whole wheat flour, with no other flour added. Graham bread must be made of one hundred per cent whole wheat or graham flour. (Graham, as you know, is another name for whole wheat flour.)

In a loaf labeled "Milk Bread," the dough must be mixed with whole milk, or its equivalent -- evaporated whole milk and water, for example, or dried skim milk and butter. Milk bread, of course, is more nutritious than bread made with water, and especially valuable for children.

One of the best ways to combat under-nutrition is to see that children get plenty of milk -- milk to drink, and milk in cooked foods such as bread. The Bureau of Home Economics has developed a school lunch loaf, made with dried skim milk. It's an extra-nutritious loaf. If you are helping plan school lunches for the fall, you may be interested in this new milk bread. Write to the Bureau of Home Economics, Washington, D. C., for the recipe.

